MUS302 Electroacoustic Composition and Sound Design Technologies 2017

Module Co-ordinator and lecturer: Dr Brian Bridges bd.bridges@ulster.ac.uk
Queries about overall module/assessment/theory and lecture materials. Please set out any initial queries in a clear and concise email.

Summary of Assignments (detailed brief on following pages)

(1)Sound gathering and cataloguing, with report: 40%

Deadline: Thursday March 2nd (week 6) before 12 noon

(2) Electroacoustic composition: 60%

Deadline: Thursday 11th May (week 14) before 12 noon

Backups: It is a requirement of all assignments that students keep backup copies for their own records. Data loss due to media failure or poor file management will not be accepted as extenuating circumstances.

Note on assignment briefs: I include *detailed* assignment briefs to provide you with comprehensive information regarding the requirements of each assignment so that you can *maximise your potential.*

Please read the briefs carefully! You will lose marks and possibly fail the assignment if you simply ask a 'knowledgeable' friend. If in doubt, email bd.bridges@ulster.ac.uk, but check that your question isn't answered here first!

Assignment One: Sound Gathering and Cataloguing

Sound gathering, cataloguing: 40%

Students will gather sounds for their composition through ~~through field recordings, the use of portable recorders or converged devices or~~ plunderphonics (appropriation of compositional raw materials from recorded/media sources, specifically, radio.

NOTE: At least half (or more) of these materials must be 'plunderphonic' samples obtained from radio sources (NI/ROI stations) for use in the *Across the Airwaves/Across the Eirwaves* project, a new workshop-based electroacoustic composition composed by Prof. Leigh Landy (DeMontfort University, Editor of *Organised Sound*), our Visiting Professor for this term.

Each student should compile at least **5–7 hours** of archived radio materials, which are accompanied by reports detailing key phrase content and time reference (minutes, seconds) within the materials, along with [in brackets] aesthetic and sonic descriptors, themes, ideas for connection with other materials.

Particular things to look out for include
•   Greetings, distinctive station IDs and styles
•   Time announcements
•   Weather announcements
•   Local news - light or more serious? Would it seem the same out of the local context?
•   Local accent differences, language, slang, formality/informality of the presenters
•   Particularly local content: e.g. community notices, death notices, phone-in shows, local music
•   Anything else you think that's distinctive

As far as possible, record complete programmes.

Gathering files:

1. Use JACK or Soundflower to 'hijack' audio streams and take them into your audio software of choice.
http://www.jackaudio.org/
https://github.com/mattingalls/Soundflower
Generally, however, live streams may be lower bitrates; if archived MP3 podcasts are available, use these
2. Some broadcasters archive their content as podcasts for MP3 streaming or direct download; e.g. BBC Radio Ulster seems to have at least some content accessible in this way: http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radioulster | RTE also does this http://www.rte.ie/radio/page/138464-about-podcasts/ (Pick the highest-bitrate file available, e.g. 128 kbits per second, or, ideally, better)
3. Additional materials: you might want to get some tuning noises/transitions from an FM radio, taken in via an analogue feed (don't prioritise this, as 1 and 2 offer more systematic coverage and content, but you might hit upon something interesting occasionally this way).

MP3 files should be changed into .wav or .aiff formats before transferring to facilitate editing

Submission format: file transfer.

Deadline and submission method:

Initial draft submission of half of your materials: Tues 28th Feb (week 5), by file transfer (Google Drive or WeTransfer), before 12 noon, with accompanying report by email to bd.bridges@ulster.ac.uk (I will provide general initial feedback)

Thursday March 2nd (week 6), by file transfer (Google Drive or WeTransfer), before 12 noon, with accompanying report by email to bd.bridges@ulster.ac.uk

Assignment Two: Electroacoustic Composition

Electroacoustic Composition: 60%

Each student must submit an electroacoustic composition utilising ~~musique concrète/found sound elements,~~ plunderphonics (elements derived from recorded musical materials which are to be recontextualised), ~~drone-based or other noise-music elements or a combination of these materials and approaches.~~ The composition will derive from materials gathered `during coursework 1.

The composition will be a section towards a collaborative radio composition (facilitated by Prof. Leigh Landy, with a view to his possible creation of a new radio piece based on NI/RoI radio, and Dr Brian Connolly, with MUS302 students listed as co-creators if this goes forward).

Students will each compose c. 2-minute sections of this composition, which will be mixed and presented over the 8-channel spatial audio loudspeaker array in Studio 2.

An accompanying report of circa 1500 to 2000 words will reflect on aesthetic issues, cultural/ contextual issues and relevant technical issues.

Deadline: Thursday 11th May (week 14, after Easter break), **file transfer** (see previous notes) of mixed-down multichannel session (i.e. multichannel bounce resulting in 8 mono files); retain a copy of your original session for reference; submission before 12 noon, with email of report to bd.bridges@ulster.ac.uk

Acceptable sampling rates are 44.1, 48 and 96 kHz, acceptable bit depths are 24-bit or 16-bit. The report should be a text file in .doc, .odt, .pdf or .rtf format.

Depending on class interest, we may have a concert of people's composition assignments.

Equipment Loan

The School provides an expanding selection of technical resources which may be borrowed by students in the completion of coursework. Items available for student loan include:

4 x Canon MD205 DV Camera incl. Rode microphone, tripod and/or camera steady
3 x M-Audio Microtrack II incl. stereo microphone
1 x HHB Portable Minidisc
2 x Canon Powershot A590
2 x Olympus DSLR

Also included are a selection of microphones, cabling and audio/video accessories.

Equipment may be borrowed for a **maximum of 48 hours** per loan agreement - excluding weekend loans which extend from Friday to Monday (36 hours max).

An Equipment Release Form (included below) must be submitted **no less than 24 hours** in advance of the collection date. The form should be completed fully and accurately. Staff may refuse loans where insufficient project details are provided.

The Equipment Release Form represents a borrowing agreement between the School and the student. During the period of the agreement the student is solely responsible for the condition and safety of the equipment. Expenses incurred due to loss or damage of equipment during the loan period will be met by the student.

All items are subject to inspection by appropriate staff on return.

Equipment **must** be returned **on the agreed date and at the agreed time**. Late returns impact on our ability to provide for student needs and are treated very seriously. All matters relating to breach of borrowing agreement will be referred to the Head of School and disciplinary action or loss of privileges may follow.

Technical resources/equipment borrowing: contact Billy Scampton, Room MQ206(Foyle Arts), wj.scampton@ulster.ac.uk. Loan requests must be submitted as soon as you know you need the equipment and absolutely *no later than 1 working day* before equipment is required. Note that this does not guarantee that your preferred piece of equipment will be available at 24 hours notice - it is your responsibility to plan your equipment requirements for your projects at the start of term!

Assignment Submission Checklist

Assignments represent an important component of how we assess the progress of each student. Independence and originality are key to work at university. You'll find therefore that assignment briefs will often offer freedom to be creative. Assignment briefs will however list a set of criteria which should be delivered at a minimum. Students are free to extend beyond the criteria where they feel appropriate.

With the exception of essays, coursework involving a practical piece of work e.g. music/audio, video, animation or piece of code should always be accompanied by an illustrated report. The report will detail all aspects of the work including concept, artistic intent, process, realisation, analysis and conclusion. Illustrations, diagrams, photos and software screen grabs should be employed where appropriate.

Students are advised to pay particular attention to coursework deadlines and due dates - these dates are normally provided within the first week of class. A crucial component in the successful completion of coursework is the timely application of effort with respect to that work i.e. commence work on assignments as soon as is possible. Commencing work too close to a deadline rarely ends well. Students will panic, experience technical problems and ultimately produce poor work. In such cases the overall experience is less than positive and quite often the student's confidence will suffer an otherwise unnecessary knock.

Submissions will always be by 1200 on either a Tuesday or Thursday of a given week. Please note that the University does not accept late submissions.

Below are listed a set of checks which we strongly advise all students to consider in advance of presenting coursework.

1. Double check that you have met the particular assignment criteria
2. Run a spell check on your report - poor spelling is not acceptable
3. Ensure that any data files being submitted are in the correct format
4. It's very important to name your files clearly.

We suggest the following file naming convention:

yourname_module_whatthefileis_version

So, for example, in the case of a video assignment for Digital Content Production 2 (DCP2), the file name for a final piece of coursework might be:

johnsmith_DCP2_coursework3_final

The '_' is used to separate terms in the name. This is to ensure greater file interoperability.

5. Always use appropriately labelled folders when submitting multiple data files.
6. Pay attention to file sizes, use appropriate media and archive/zip if necessary.
7. **Always check your media before submitting. Be positive that all files are present and correct**.
8. Group projects should always include a 'Group Project Contribution' form (included below). The form must be completed by all members of the group.
9. Label your work clearly and appropriately i.e. discs, paperwork etc. When submitting CD or DVD media, **please ensure you house the material in a suitable case or CD/DVD envelope**. Scratched media may not operate as intended by the creator!
10. Make sure you enter the correct module code (MUS302), Module Title ('Electroacoustic Composition'), module co-ordinator (Brian Bridges) on submitting your work.